

Jesus and Anger

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Introduction

Inside Out is a 2015 comedy-drama film in which five emotions – Joy, Sadness, Fear, Anger, and Disgust – are creatively personified in the life of a young girl named Riley Anderson as she grows up and adapts to changes in her life. The thrust of the film is that mental states and human emotions are meaningfully affected by and manifested in relationships with others.

Yes, anger is one of the common emotional responses to a number of issues we face in life. We do not have to live very long to realize that the potential for anger is not far away.

Was this emotion a reality in the life of Jesus? The New Testament provides an unmistakable YES to this question.

New Testament Accounts

The fact that Jesus became angry should not surprise us for at least two reasons: He was a human being and human beings become angry. But He was also God and the Bible is full of references to the anger/wrath of God. Therefore, let us look at the NT accounts of what made Jesus angry. The various Greek words for anger are transliterated and noted in brackets:

First, He became angry when the forces of evil set themselves against the will of God:

1. He addressed Satan with anger (Mt. 4:10; 16:22 [*epitimaō*]).
2. He angrily rebuked/scolded [*epitimaō*] the evil spirits (Mk. 1:23-25; 9:25; Mt. 17:18; Lk. 4:35, 41; 9:42).
3. He responded with anger [*orgistheis*] to the disease of leprosy (Mk. 1:41).
4. He was angered by the devilish nature of the Jewish people (Jn. 8:44).
5. He was angered over the evil nature of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees (Mt. 12:34; 23:2, 33).
6. He was angered over the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7; 16:3; 22:18; 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29; 24:51; Mk. 7:6; Lk. 6:42; 11:44; 12:1, 56; 13:15).

Second, He became angry when He was faced with no faith/unbelief and disobedience:

1. Jesus was angered [*embrimaomai*] over the anticipatory disobedience of those He healed (Mt. 9:30-31; Mk. 1:40-45).
2. Jesus was angered [*epitimaō*] by the lack of faith of His disciples and people (Mt. 17:18).
3. Jesus was angered [*embrimaomai*] over the lack of faith in Him as the resurrection and life (Jn. 11:33, 38).

Third, He became angry over resistance to His offer of mercy:

1. He was angrily sorrowful [*sullupeomai*] with the Pharisees because of their criticism of His healing on the Sabbath (Mk. 3:5) and who because of their insistence on law, rather than love, seek His death (Mk. 3:6).
2. He was angry [*orgistheis*] over people's rejection of His invitation to have a share in the Kingdom/Rule/Reign of God (Lk. 14:21).
3. He was angry [*orgistheis*] over the spirit of mercilessness to those who had received mercy (Mt. 18:34-35).

Fourth, He became angry over the criticism of His disciples about little children (Mk. 10:13-16 [*aganakteo*]; Mt. 19:13-15; Lk. 18:15-17 [*epitimaō*]).

Fifth, He became angry over the criticism of the Pharisees about His disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath (Mk. 2:23-28; Mt. 12:1-8; Lk. 6:1-5 [*apokrinomai*]).

Sixth, He became angry [*oneidizo*] over cities which witnessed His miraculous works and still did not turn to God (Mt. 11:20-24).

Seventh, He became angry over the use of religion for economic gain (Mt. 12:12-13; Mk. 11:15-18; Lk. 19:45-48; Jn. 2:13-22 [*apokrinomai*]).

Eighth, He became angry and rebuked [*epitimaō*] the wind (Mt. 8:26; Mk. 4:39; Lk. 8:24).

Ninth, He became angry and rebuked [*epitimaō*] Peter (Mk. 8:33), James and John (Lk. 9:55).

Tenth, He became angry and rebuked [*epitimaō*] the fever (Lk. 4:39).

Eleventh, He angrily threatens or warns [*epitimaō*] people not to reveal yet that He is the Messiah (Mt. 12:16; Lk. 9:21).

Twelfth, He angrily condemned/rejected/cursed [*apokrinomai*] the fruitless fig tree (Mk. 11:14).

Thirteenth, He angrily reacted against [*apokrinomai*] the challenge by the Jewish leaders as to His authority from God (Jn. 2:19).

Conclusion

Anger is an emotion which must constantly be monitored and assessed as to whether it is constructive or destructive. When it is a manifestation of that which is selfish and harmful to self or others, it is destructive and must be avoided.

However, when anger is under control, it can be a constructive, powerful force for doing good in several ways. In other words, anger may help us see things which we might not see if we take a phlegmatic or indifferent attitude toward many of the things taking place in our own lives, as well as in society at large. **First**, it may alert us to things that are wrong and motivate us to fight against injustices in the areas of child and elder abuse; sexual exploitation; drug problems; environmental pollutions; prejudices (racism, sexism, ageism); MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving); PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals). **Second**, it may motivate us to respond to the needs of the neglected: the poor, the elder in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. **Third**, it may motivate us to be more responsible when it comes to making wiser choices with regard to our physical (diet, exercise) and mental (like a muscle, “use it or lose it”) functioning. **Fourth**, it may reveal to us the need to change what and how we are thinking about ourselves, others, and situations in a few different ways: (1) We may need to look for other choices (i.e., develop conflict resolution skills, empathize with the other person and see how they are looking at the matter); (2) We may need to change any cognitive distortions we have into more rational and logical perspectives. In chapter 3 of his book, *Feeling Good*, David Burns provides an amazingly accurate and easily understandable look at ten distorted thought patterns. **Fifth**, it may motivate us to pray, turn over to God whatever is bothering us, and even seek counseling. Thus, anger may be an opportunity for additional growth in grace and development as members of the human race.